

December, 1997

**RI Department of Education, RI Department of Health,
RI Department of Human Services, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families Interagency Agreement
Cover Sheet**

- *Key objective of the agreement*

Ensure service continuity and facilitate collaboration among state and local programs serving young children ages birth through 5 years with disabilities and their families in a manner that will promote efficient and effective use of public resources and be consistent with the goals and objectives of the Children's Cabinet State Child System Plan. These programs include those operated by (1) local education agencies governed by the RI Department of Education; (2) Head Start governed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families through its Region I Office; and (3) Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families governed by the RI Department of Health. The RI Department of Human Services is also party to this agreement, because it is the state Medicaid agency.

- *Parties to the agreement*

Signatories include the RI Department of Education, RI Department of Health, RI Department of Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families (Head Start). Supporting partners include the RI Head Start Association, the Association of RI Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE), and the RI Head Start State Collaboration Grant.

- *Duration of the agreement*

This shall be for 3 years from the date of signature with annual review.

- *Concise summary of the agreement and how it is to be carried out*

This agreement recognizes that the needs of children and families necessitate collaboration among education, Head Start and Early Intervention programs to ensure quality, comprehensive, non-duplicative and continuous services as children and families move from one agency to another. This need is reinforced by legal requirements which mandate local interagency agreements to clarify comparable and sometimes overlapping roles and responsibilities of these programs. This agreement does not add new requirements. Rather, it affirms the need for local collaboration based on existing legalities and, in particular, child and family needs. It supports efforts of local community agencies to coordinate and maximize resources as they collaborate to meet the needs of children and families. Finally, it commits the signing and supporting parties to this agreement to joint training and technical assistance to support local community collaborative efforts.

- *Legal Mandates*

Agreement required by federal or state statute or regulation, or court order as follows: (1) Federal requirements for interagency agreements found in regulations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts B and C related to state agreements and (2) federal requirements for interagency agreements found in Head Start Program Performance Standards on Services for Children with Disabilities of 1993 related to local agreements and in Head Start Program Performance Standards of 1996 related to community partnerships.

**RI Department of Education, RI Department of Health,
RI Department of Human Services, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Administration for Children and Families Interagency Agreement**

A. Purpose

We believe interagency collaboration is beneficial to children and families and the agencies that serve them. We see the unique services and mandates of individual agencies not as a source of division but as diverse assets for maximizing community benefit as a result of our working together. Consistent with this belief, through this agreement, the signatories and supporting parties hereby intend to:

1. Affirm our common philosophy of children and families first and our commitment to (a) respect for the diversity of families; (b) families as integral partners in decisions regarding their children and our services; and (c) parents as their children's first and most important teachers.
2. Use joint training and technical assistance (TA) among the signatories and supporting parties to enhance and reinforce local partnerships among agencies characterized by open communication, an atmosphere of equality, and collaborative activities.
3. Facilitate early identification and appropriate services for children and their families;
4. Set the stage for collaborative local agreements related to fiscal issues and service delivery (e.g. referral, evaluation and services for eligible children and families);
5. Provide a mechanism for facilitating local compliance with legal mandates related to collaboration as delineated on the agreement cover sheet; and
6. Provide a framework for clarification of financial responsibility for services for children with disabilities.

B. Narrative

State and local education, Head Start and Early Intervention agencies each have unique roles and responsibilities. At the same time, they share similar mandates. They frequently serve the same children and families either through collaborative services or as children and families move from one agency to another. Examples are as follows:

Children and Families Served:

1. children with disabilities ages birth through 2 years and their families served under IDEA, Part C through Early Intervention services,
2. children ages birth through age 5 years and their families served through Head Start, and
3. children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years and their families served under IDEA, Part B through local school districts.

Common Points of Collaboration among the Agencies:

1. Between Head Start and Early Intervention services related to children with disabilities ages birth through 2 years and their families
2. Among Head Start, local school districts and other appropriate agencies related to

- a. developmental screening for all children and
 - b. the provision of a free appropriate public education for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years and their families
3. Among Head Start, Early Intervention services and local school districts as it relates to the transition of children (as appropriately referred or identified) and their families from one agency to another when the child is age eligible for such transitions to occur, e.g.,
- a. at age 3 *from* Early Intervention or Early Head Start *to*
 - 1) local school districts or
 - 2) Head Start preschool services
- Note: Transition planning begins at 30 months for children serviced by Early Intervention
- b. as children and families move from one program to another within the 3 through 5 age range
 - 1) from local school districts to Head Start or
 - 2) from Head Start to local school districts

Common Areas Where Collaboration is Beneficial to Children, Families and Agencies Serving Them:

The signatories and supporting parties to this agreement hereby commit to joint efforts to enhance local agencies' collaborative efforts to develop local written agreements and related strategies concerning the following:

- 1. Family involvement
- 2. Child Outreach/Child Find screening, referrals, and evaluations
- 3. Service eligibility
- 4. Individual program planning
 - a. Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children with disabilities ages Birth to 3 years and their families and
 - b. Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children with disabilities ages 3 through 5 years
- 5. Primary and related services as referenced under IDEA, Part B, IDEA, Part C, and Head Start Program Performance Standards (Provision of these services will be determined based on whether the child is eligible for such services and on the child's individual need.)
- 6. Service delivery in settings which, to the maximum extent possible, are in natural settings typical for the age of the child and which educate children with disabilities along with children without disabilities

7. Resource sharing which may include, but not be limited to, facilities, materials and equipment, collaborative services, screening, etc.
8. Transition
9. Confidentiality
10. Records transfer
11. Joint staff training
12. Sharing child count data as appropriate

C. Agreement Dissemination Plans

Those whose responsibilities are affected by or who would otherwise benefit from knowledge of the agreement will be informed and trained in the application of the agreement and will have copies available to them as follows. The agreement signatories and supporting parties will collaborate on a series of regional sessions within the first year of agreement signing. These sessions will involve local agency representatives and family members both as trainers and as participating interagency teams. At each session, participants will receive information on the agreement. In addition, a major focus of the session will be giving local teams a chance to share and further develop strategies they can use to enhance local collaboration. In conjunction with these sessions, copies of the agreement will be sent out by the agreement signatories.

D. Annual Review

The RI Children's Cabinet Standing Committee on Interagency Agreements shall annually distribute copies of the cover sheets of each agreement to members of the Children's Cabinet for their information and any updates, revisions or termination. This will be coordinated with an annual review of the document by representatives of the signatories and supporting parties. This review will include evaluation of what is working and what could be improved at both the state and local levels.

E. Dispute Resolution

In the event that misunderstandings or differences of opinion occur related to this agreement, the following mechanism is available for dispute resolution.

Local Level Disputes

1. If the dispute is at the local level, the affected parties will meet and attempt to reach a solution.
2. If step one is unsuccessful, they may seek the assistance of one of the parties to this agreement (see item F below) or his/her designee.
3. The agreement signer or designee shall investigate the matter and provide clarification or support as feasible to resolve the matter.
4. If step 3 does not result in resolution, the agreement signer or designee shall contact other agreement signers that are the counterparts of the local agencies impacted by the dispute for the purpose of investigating the matter and providing clarification or support as feasible to resolve the matter.

5. If step 4 does not result in resolution, the agreement signers or designees convened in step 4 shall assign a state mediator to resolve the matter.

State Level Disputes

1. If the dispute is at the state level, the agreement signers or designees will meet and attempt to reach a solution.
2. If step 1 does not result in resolution, the agreement signers or designees convened in step 1 shall seek the assistance of a state mediator to resolve the matter.

F. Signatures of chief executive officers of each agency party to agreement and date of signing

RI Department of Education

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Peter McWalters, Commissioner

RI Department of Health

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Patricia Nolan, M.D., M.P.H., Director

Administration for Children and Families

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Hugh Galligan, Regional Administrator, Region I

Department of Human Services

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Christine C. Ferguson, Director

G. Signatures of representatives of supporting partners to agreement and date of signing

RI Head Start Association

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Lynda Dickenson, President

Association of RI Administrators of Special Education (ARIASE)

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Mark Hawk, President

RI Head Start State Collaboration Grant

Signature (Authorized Official)

Date

Name and Title of Authorized Official: Lawrence G. Pucciarelli, Director